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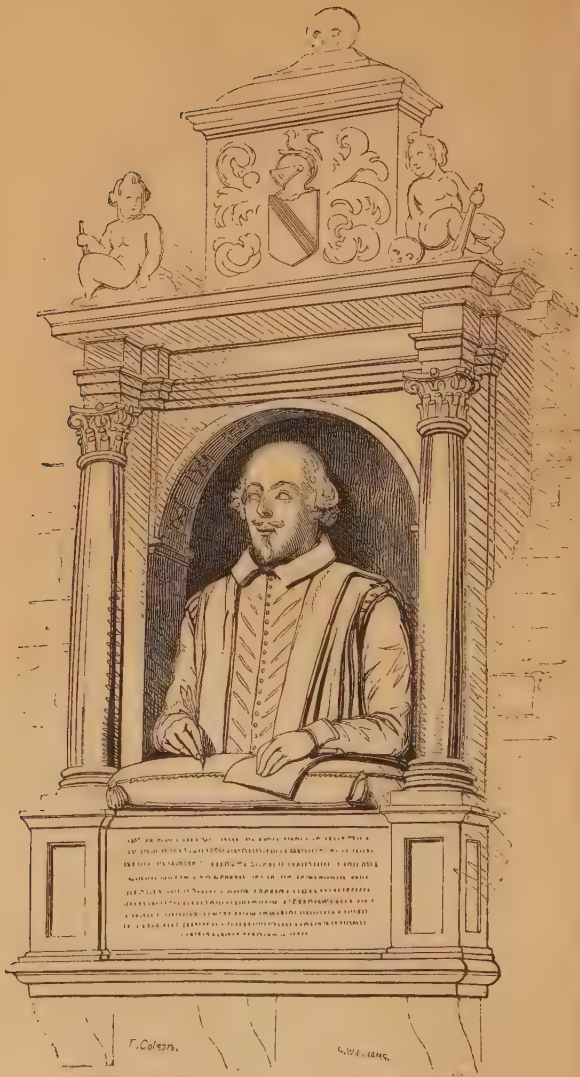

SHAKSPERE'S MONUMENT.

A GUIDE

TO THE

BIRTH-TOWN OF SHAKSPERE

AND

THE POET'S RURAL HAUNTS.

BY GEORGE MAY,

AUTHOR OF "A DESCRIPTIVE HISTORY OF EVESHAM."

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ADDENDA.

Page 27, line 1, after "sir Hugh Clopton," read—*barrister-at-law.*

Page 57, line 15, after "1599," read—*or rather* 1590, *as it stood before a late repair*:

PREFACE.

This little Volume is intended to supply—what has been found, by the Writer, in occasional visits to Stratford, to be hitherto needed there—a Guide-Book which, while shunning diffuseness, shall furnish to the Venerator of Shakspere a brief Memorial directing him particularly to those localities which can never be disassociated from the Poet's name; but which, at the same time, shall not omit due mention of all else deserving notice within and near that interesting Town.

G. M.

Bridge-Street,

Evesham, 1847.

I.

SURVEY OF THE TOWN.

Stratford, from the Shottery Road.

STREET-WALK—BIRTHPLACE OF THE POET—HIS SCHOOL—HIS RESIDENCE—HIS GRAVE.

Who is there that has not yet made pilgrimage to Shaksperian Stratford? Or who, not having yet thus done, does not seriously purpose soon to supply that gap in his life's history? For where shall we find a spot so truly catholic as this; which, limited to no sect of human thought, attracts its devotees from every varying grade of religious and political persuasion? Who then—we further venture to inquire—would not possess some brief memorial, at least in print, of so spirit-stirring a locality? A memorial, which shall when looked into, either vividly recall the glad emotions of a visit past, or act impulsively to bring about the journey or the trip so long intended.

The town of Stratford is seated, as its name imports, upon the River Avon. There are other towns called Stratford,—street-ford—and there are other rivers named as is this stream. But the one Man's name connected with the town and river here, exalts them both above all other towns and streams throughout—not England only—but the world: and therefore do pilgrims wend their way hitherward, from whereso-ever that name and the productions of the Mind that bears it are heard or known.

To one who travels hither from a district of bolder character, the scenery round Stratford will appear quiet, smooth, and fertile. To those who enter through the rich vale of Evesham, bounded by its softly swelling hills,—this neighbourhood, with much of similarity as respects fertilty, will present in gene-ral a more unrestrained and umbrageous intermixture of wood. For though the district borders close upon the adjacent counties of Gloucester and Worcester, it is mainly characterized by the distinctive features of the teeming, verdant, well-wooded county of Warwick; which—as respects its central position in the kingdom —old Drayton styles

"That shire which we the heart of England well may call."

But the Visitor, who would become tolerably ac-quainted with the locality of Stratford, must not be content to rush hither on the fumes of steam, and after hurrying through a street or two, to *lionize*, then suffer himself to be conveyed away by a returning train. No! This is not the mode either to gaze upon

the memorable objects embosomed here, nor yet by any possibility to realize those deep considerations which the presence of such objects ought to inspire. Whether then thou journey hither—Reader—in that independent mode which best befits a pilgrim,—upon foot—or in a vehicle, whether horse-drawn or steam-propelled, leave hurry at thine Inn, and thenceforth calmly and considerately yield thyself up to the genius who presides within the place and spreads his elevating influence over the glad country round.

The natural position of Stratford, so favorable in all respects, caused it to be early tenanted; and, as usual with most localities of superior loveliness, the earliest proprietors whom we can distinguish here were monks. For, in the year 703, a monastery in this place is stated to have been given to Ethelred, king of Mercia, by Ecgwin then bishop of Worcester and founder of the abbey of Evesham, in exchange for a convent at Fladbury, near the latter place. The monastery at Stratford must therefore have been established soon after the conversion of the Mercians to the Augustinian faith; but at what period it was dissolved does not appear. Probably that event occurred about the year 970, during the reign of Edgar; when in the struggles that took place between the monks and seculars, some earl of Mercia, claiming to arbitrate, occasionally placed his hand upon the property in dispute; which did not in every case revert back again to ecclesiastical use.

The town, though still presenting evidence of its antiquity, in the dwellings of olden style that appear

occasionally, is well and conveniently laid out; the streets being in most instances airy and spacious, with intervals for gardens—imperatively needed in all our towns—included between the house-rows. Clean brick and tile, with fitting masonry, are also general; imparting an air of cleanliness and durability to the place.

Let us then, before we visit the localities most intimately connected with the Poet's history, take a brief, general survey of the town.

We stroll to the lengthened Bridge, with its broad and elevated causeway: and here we trace the placid stream of Avon, as it ripples, ocean-bound, beneath those rounded elms,—above which points that heavenward spire which reminds us of the mighty Spirit whose mortal covering is enshrined beneath. Returning, we may glance—as we pass the busier High-street—upon the Chapel Tower, beyond that double row of shops, which directs us to the vicinity of the now destroyed Dwelling-place, where the poet terminated his career. Hence passing into Henley-street, —westward from where we stand—at a little distance on the right, we discern the humble tenement where Shakspere* emerged to life.

---

* Mr. Campbell, in his edition of Shakspeare's Dramatic Works, observes that "the poet's name has been variously written Shaxpeare, Shackspeare, Shakspeare, and Shakspere:" to which varieties, says Mr. De Quincey, might be added "Shagspere," from the marriage-bond. In fact, orthography, even in proper names, was in Shakspere's time most unsettled and arbitrary; but it is now considered as pretty certain that the poet himself, as sir Frederick Madden has shown, wrote the name uniformly *Shakspere*. It is so written twice in the course of his will, and appears thus in his autograph upon a blank leaf of Florio's Montaigne, now in the British Museum.

An unglazed aperture on the ground-floor, under a wooden shed projecting like butchers' shambles, a crazy hatch at the side, with a low casement window in the wooden-framed story above, comprise the present frontage of the dwelling. Like many of the comparatively huge old houses of our ancient towns the original dwelling has been subdivided; and one half of it, new-fronted, now forms the Swan Inn. But, at the best, the entire house, though then roomy, could only have been suited to an occupier of the industrial class in life.

[The Birthplace of Shakspere.]

John Shakspere, the father of the poet,—who was not, as has been incorrectly stated, his third, but his eldest son—was in 1555 occupied in Stratford as a

glover.* But this as his leading trade would not, at that period, shut him out from collateral pursuits. He is stated, upon fair authority, to have been also a wool-buyer: and he certainly rented, and after his marriage possessed, land. The skins, and wool, and pasture-ground were all connected: and even now, it is no unusual occurrence to find a thriving trade in the rural districts assisted by farming land. With these facts in view, we regard the poet's father as one of those plain, pains-taking people, who, by perseverance and a lucky hit or two,† become what is regarded as "well-to-do in the world." Thus we find him in 1558 a burgess, in 1565 an alderman, and in 1568 high-bailiff of the town. As respects his mother,—"THE MOTHER OF SHAKSPERE!—how august a title to the reverence of infinite generations!"—she, prior to her marriage in 1557, bore the mellifluous name of Mary Arden, and was youngest daughter of Robert Arden of Wilmecote, whose family was of ancient standing in the county of Warwick.

Let us enter the tenement which tradition, many-tongued, proclaims to be the birthplace of the Poet. The room we step into from the street is rudely paved with small and foot-worn stones, cracked and broken in every possible direction. Since its occupation

* A confusion between two distinct householders in Stratford (nearly contemporary but not kinsmen) both named John Shakspere, had till recently occasioned this and similar mistakes. The poet was the eldest of four sons; his brothers' names were Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund: he also had four sisters.

† Such as his marriage into the family of Arden, whose position in all respects was much beyond his own.

some years since by a butcher, it retains that forlorn appearance which such shops when unprovisioned present. The little room behind is now dimly lighted by a narrow casement, but has still its ample chimney-nooks and hearth. The stairs stand squeezed into a corner since the division of the house. They lead at once into the upper chamber next the street, where the poet—on or about the 23d of April, 1564—is believed to have been born.

The room has been but little altered since, if even at all. Its ceiling is low, as was at that time usual; and the walls look chill and naked, because they are now whitelimed, and originally they would have been concealed by heavy arras. Even the fire-place, from the huge beam of oak built in as the mantel-tree, is hardly later than Elizabeth's time. Would it be credited that within these three years a party of young ladies, accompanied by their teacher, abstracted a cracked portion of this beam during a brief absence of the guide? The present furniture of the room is scanty, but appropriate. A cast from the monumental bust occupies one corner; and the ceiling as well as walls are covered with pencilled autographs. The last are interesting, as tokens of homage borne from all parts of the civilized world: but some of the most important are rudely obliterated by vulgar scrawlers, who with the fist of a porter, leave names, in ink or lamp-black, as staring as bag-marks.

Having left the birthplace, let us now visit the poet's School. We find it among a stack of ancient buildings adjoining the Chapel of the ancient Gild of

the town. The existence of such a fraternity here as early as the reign of John, is itself no trifling proof of the then mercantile importance of the town. Together with their chapel, this brotherly community likewise endowed an hospital for sick members, and a school for the young. When Henry the Eighth took possession of a host of similar endowments, this with its chapel and accompanying buildings fell into his hands. But fortunately for the inhabitants of Stratford, no fawning courtier succeeded in begging or professedly buying these from the king. The property thus continued with the crown "till another king arose," who exercised a conscience: and thus, in the seventh year of his reign, Edward the Sixth granted the whole to the corporation of Stratford, for charitable and public uses. In this manner their School, founded in the reign of Henry the Sixth, by Jolepe, a priest, a native too of the town and a member of its gild, was happily restored to the inhabitants. The only qualifications for admission are that the boy be seven years old, able to read, and resident in Stratford.

Here, we doubt not that William Shakspere, eldest son of the trader and burgher in Henley-street, received as effective an education as nine-tenths of our modern youths carry away with them from Winchester or Eton. For we are to remember that this as a royal "grammar-school," would then include the latin language as a principal subject of tuition; by which a clue was given, especially at that period, to the wide range of general knowledge which no lad of an inquir-

ing turn would—even amid the occasional excursiveness of a joyous and mischief-loving spirit—ultimately fail to employ. Thus were the seeds of knowledge implanted in that pliant mind which in due time exhibited such matured and abundant fruit.

The Hall of the ancient gild occupies the ground-floor of the building. This continues much in its original state, excepting the insertion of a naked brick chimney, which we hope to see supplanted by a more appropriate fire-place of stone. Above, is the School-room; which—as destined to be filled by youngsters—has been from the beginning crushed under a low ceiling, as if to keep all warm. Recently some of the beams have been reduced, and the floor has been repaired; but we think that tutors as well as scholars would breathe more freely on a sultry day, were a few dormer-windows inserted in the roof; not framed after the joiners' pattern, but appropriately wrought in stone, and facing the street. One desk tradition has pointed out as that at which the poet sat; and consequently later pupils were *whittling* it away in relics for their friends, till it became needful to place the residue under lock-and-key, where it now remains in safety.

As respects the Hall beneath,—from whence we ascended—it is worthy of remembrance that here, when a company of players visited Stratford in the time of queen Elizabeth, their performances took place; the municipal officers being usually their patrons upon such occasions. As to the ability of these performers, it is to be remarked that they were not incompetent

strollers, but successively the very best companies in the kingdom; distinguished as such by the patronage of the queen, and protected by some of her highest nobles. The drama had, but a few years previously, been restricted to, so-called, religious instruction; its subjects being such as were considered sacred, and as such exhibited in churches and church-yards,—often, if not chiefly, by the clergy themselves. The inmates of a country-town may therefore be considered as going to a play, in Shakspere's time,—as play-goers ought still to attend the theatre—with an expectation of being instructed as well as entertained. On these occasions this hall was allowed to the actors, free of cost; and several entries still on the books of the corporation, show payments to have been made out of the borough funds to further such performances.* In this apartment, therefore, the youthful Shakspere probably first beheld a play; and thus was he introduced to that national drama, which he afterward made it the business of his life to dignify and reform.

Immediately adjoining the school, the hall, and chapel-tower,—now waves the foliage of a Garden—where, in the last century, stood NEW PLACE; the mansion purchased by the great Dramatist in 1597, during the height of his career, and when at the age of thirty-three. The residence was previously known in Stratford as "the Great House," and had been

* Entries of such payments, made to the players of Lords Oxford, Warwick, and Essex, occur in 1569, and at intervals from 1573 to 1586. In the latter year, we find that the queen's players performed here.

erected by Sir Hugh Clopton, a native of the town, and its memorable benefactor: for not only did he rebuild the adjoining chapel, but likewise erected, at his private cost, the bridge of stone on fourteen arches across the Avon, with its elevated causeway; both of which will long remain to do him honor. From this family the residence had passed to others, and about

[Site of New-Place, Gild-Chapel and School.]

the time of the poet's purchase it was called "New Place." Having repaired it, Shakspere seems to have thenceforth spent a portion of each year within it, among his former friends; and toward the close of

life, after a successful metropolitan career of five-and-twenty years, he at length lived here entirely. Thus to have escaped from the turmoil of a London theatrical life, at such a period—to his quiet country home, his family and his friends, to the stream so well remembered—which here washed his garden's bounds—and to the silent converse of his maturest thoughts, if not to the elimination also of his most profound productions,—must have been to him indeed "like a renewal of youth." Nor did he, while thus himself at ease, omit the filial duties of a son: his venerable father, then about seventy years of age, having, since 1578, been in less prosperous circumstances than before.*

After the death of Shakspere,—which occurred here on the 23d of April, 1616, his age being 53—New Place passed to his daughter, Mrs. Hall. Upon the death of *her* daughter in 1670,—who, then Lady Barnard, stands not clear in the opinion of posterity from the charge of concealing or destroying certain of her grandsire's papers†—the mansion was sold out of the family. After that, it was re-fronted, and otherwise impaired—for so we understand the word "re-

* It is certain (says Mr. De Quincey) that about this time he assisted his father in obtaining a new grant of arms from the heralds' college, and thus re-established his fortunes. That grant permitted to his father and his issue the impalement of the arms of Arden with his own.

† This lady, whose opinions in religion are considered to have been strongly Calvinistic (at a period when those sentiments were *consistently* maintained) tradition has accused of carrying away many of her grandfather's papers from Stratford, which have never since been discovered.

paired," in such connection—by sir Hugh Clopton, who owned it at the commencement of the last century. It is painful to pursue the subject farther. We will only state, as calmly as such an outrage will allow, that after this, a son-in-law of sir Hugh, who bore the name of Gastrell—with "reverend" prefixed—after some dispute with the parish assessors and an eviction of much ill feeling toward the public, ultimately razed the poet's dwelling to the ground, in the year 1759, and sold away the materials!

Of the Mulberry-tree, said to have been here planted by Shakspere himself,—which the clergyman above-named cut down and sold for fire-wood in 1756—all have heard; and of its famed jubilee-laudation by Garrick and his friends in 1769, all have read,—when, as Cowper sings—

> "The mulberry-tree was hung with blooming wreath,
> The mulberry-tree stood centre of the dance;
> The mulberry-tree was hymned with dulcet airs;
> And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
> Supplied such relics as devotion holds
> Still sacred, and preserves with pious care."

But though, doubtless, much actual cant has been associated with the tree, can we in calm reflectiveness do otherwise than deplore the loss of this living memorial of the dramatic Teacher, planted here by his own hand; beneath which, we may presume that, he had reclined,—and where occasionally he may have jotted down some happy illustration of created character, which at an unsought moment coursed unexpected through his ever-active brain.

As there is nothing to detain us longer on the site of New Place, let us pass onward toward the poet's Grave. In our way thither, we notice on the opposite side of the street, one of the undisturbed tenements of Stratford in the olden time, which then looked out toward New Place, when Shakspere had improved it, and while he dwelt there as his home. The front is framed of timber, diligently carved, including a tier of wide-stretched casements, beneath a high-pitched gabled roof. A date of 1596 among the carving informs us that the house was built after the great fire of Stratford, which happened in the preceding year. As we pursue our walk, the open and cheerful street is interspersed with dwellings of more amplified and modern character, indicative of present inmates who are "at ease in their possessions." Turning toward the south, our way becomes fringed with the bright foliage of linden-trees, bounded by a heavier verdure beyond. Along this course we reach the Churchyard-gate, which here admits us to the "lime-tree bower," that forms from hence a long and grateful avenue to the porch.

Let us stay awhile within the gate, and cast a glance around. Where shall we find a brighter churchyard picture than this presents! Look athwart the turf, beneath those venerable elms that stand upon the river's brink,—that stream which gently undulating here bounds the soil sacred to the reception of human dust—and see how beyond its banks the enamelled meadows stretch away into the horizon. It is high spring-tide while we gaze: the scene glit-

ters with light, and life, and hope; and even the lettered stones that throng the ground rise up as harbingers of immortality. Amidst these appropriate accompaniments, how strikingly does the harmonious outline of the Church appear in view. The long-drawn nave with its clere-story of pointed windows, thickly set, rises above the aile; the chancel, with lengthened windows and a richer parapet, stretches toward the east; the transept boldly projects in front; while aloft, the peaceful spire rearing its graceful outline, reminds us of a higher and a brighter life.

We enter, through a lofty porch, fit vestibule of such a structure, wherein—thanks to an advancing taste in these particulars—no unsightly innovation is now obtruded on the eye, and where £7000 has recently been well expended to supply what had become decayed. Protestantism has wrought a change in the appropriation of this capacious nave, with its dependant ailes. A congregation, to be *taught* must hear. This area—under the former code of worship left comparatively unoccupied for the passage of processions toward the choir—is therefore now required to accommodate an assembly who are expected to understand, as well as hear: and the number of parishioners, from the town and its surrounding hamlets, who attend at this—the "mother" church, must of necessity be large. In introducing sittings for so many, the architect has properly contrived to render them subordinate, by employing the low poppy-headed bench, and keeping back the gallery-fronts within the ailes. The organ-case is, for its present position, not

too low; but we would rather have seen it ascending within the arch beneath the tower,—there forming, in the absence of the ancient rood-loft,* a befitting screen before the chancel.

The spacious windows of the clere-story—thickly ranged in pairs above the arches of the ailes—look calmly down, and through their dim latticed panes shed a softened radiance below. Appropriate panelling wrought in the stone, with light pilasters of the same material, bearing up the oak-framed roof, occupy and decorate the remaining portion of the walls. We pass beneath the tower,—leaving the transepts on the sides which complete the cross-shaped outline of the church—and stand within the Chancel.

This portion of the building is now seen much as it originally appeared. The plaistered ceiling, the whitelime, and the dirt, that prior to 1836 encumbered it, are now removed, and we thus can fairly judge how it at first appeared. The general character is similar to that of the nave. The walls are unpannelled,—though perhaps once painted in fresco—but the absence of lateral ailes permits the windows here to descend much lower, while the attention is at the same time restricted to a narrower space. Beneath the northern wall, near to the great east window, is THE GRAVE—and over it the Monument—of HIM, whose very bones are venerated as if they formed the soul of all the material workmanship around.

* A gallery between the nave and chancel (with screen-work beneath) wherein the crucifix, with images of Mary and John, were placed.

And here we stand. Not upon—for reverence-sake—but beside the stone, that covers His remains, in honoring whom the world bows down in homage to the mind of man: thus worshipping that Inscrutable and Eternal One, who alike evokes, sustains, controls, and endows the human spirit. An earnest is thy brilliant genius—Poet of Mankind! of the vast and yet unfathomed capabilities of the soul,—even while shrouded and impeded by its present earth-bound position. *Assuring* us, withal, that spirits kindred to thine own—alike proceeding from the Eternal Mind—can never die; but, far beyond this narrow sphere, shall live, enjoy, expand, with ever-increasing brilliancy and power.

Although the lower portion of the face, in the bust upon the monument, most probably presents a wide departure from the living expression of the original,—attributable to the model having been prepared after death had relaxed the tension of the facial muscles—yet thanks be to the kindly relative who gave to us that marble outline of the poet's form, which still perpetuates among us his lofty brow, his placid countenance, his elevated attitude of ordinary life.*

---

* The arms upon the monument are—*Or, on a bend sable, a tilting spear of the first, point upwards, headed argent.* Crest, *a falcon displayed argent, supporting a spear in pale or.* The inscriptions beneath the bust are as follow:—

IVDICIO PYLIVM, GENIO SOCRATEM, ARTE MARONEM,
TERRA TEGIT, POPVLVS MÆRET, OLYMPVS HABET.

STAY PASSENGER, WHY GOEST THOV BY SO FAST,
READ, IF THOV CANST, WHOM ENVIOUS DEATH HATH PLAST

Capacious Spirit, that once animated the mouldering frame beneath our feet—how vast must be the sphere of agency for such as thee, in that sublime position to which thou art yet destined by thy God!

Not that we would, herein, be understood as covertly admitting a prevailing fallacy, that genius, even though abused, becomes a virtual passport at the close of life, exonerating its possessor from the natural result of a career at wilful variance with man's inward sense of truth and rectitude. Although there *is* a class of minds, "between whose idea of life and their fact of life there has at one time been a gulf," so wide, that such require a sterner course of moral discipline before they become confirmed in one harmonious course of idealized and veritable being. "With bleeding feet" —truthfully adds a living writer—"such men re-tread their way; but gain at last the mountain-top of life, and wonder at the tortuous track they left behind."*

WITHIN THIS MONVMENT, SHAKSPEARE, WITH WHOME
QVICK NATVRE DIDE; WHOSE NAME DOTH DECK YS. TOMBE
FAR MORE THEN COST; SIEH ALL YT. HE HATH WRITT
LEAVES LIVING ART BVT PAGE TO SERVE HIS WITT.
OBIIT ANO. DOI. 1616. ÆTATIS 53. DIE 23. AP.

Upon the grave-stone in the pavement below are cut the often cited lines—

GOOD FREND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOASED HEARE;
BLESTE BE Y^E MAN Y^T. SPARES THES STONES
AND CVRST BE HE Y^T. MOVES MY BONES.

* Theodore Parker.—"Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion."

II.

FABRICS AND FOUNDATIONS OF OLDEN TIME.

[Stratford Collegiate Church.]

THE CHURCH—THE COLLEGE—THE GILD AND CHAPEL OF HOLY CROSS.

The present Church of Stratford, though probably erected upon the site of the Anglo-saxon monastery, —as was the general opinion in Leland's time—is entirely distinct from the one originally connected with the conventual foundation. The monastery, as we have already intimated, was dissolved prior to the Norman conquest; subsequent to which period it is evident that even the oldest portion of the present

church must have been erected: though neither the name of the founder nor the date of its foundation is preserved. The researches of sir William Dugdale on this point, are thus summed up in his well-known Antiquities of Warwickshire. "The church here, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, is of a very ancient structure, little less than the Conqueror's time, as I guess by the fabric of the tower-steeple; but part thereof besides hath been rebuilt at several times." Of these later or renovated portions, we find the south aile to have been constructed by Abp. John de Stratford, a native here, early in the reign of Edward III; the choir to have been rebuilt by Dr. Thomas Balshall, warden of the adjacent college, during the reign of Edward IV; and the transept to have been restored by the executors of sir Hugh Clopton, of Stratford, in the reign of Henry the Seventh.

The present Spire—erected on a substantial tower, retaining vestiges of anglo-norman workmanship, especially about the windows—supplanted an earlier structure of wood and lead, which being decayed, was taken down in 1763. About the same time the parapet of the nave seems to have been re-wrought; as its present battlements are said to be much inferior to those removed in 1764. The height of the tower and spire is at present 163 feet.

The lofty windows in the Chancel were originally filled with painted glass, vestiges of which are still preserved in the great east window. Within this portion of the church are also placed the altar-tomb and effigy of John Coombe, the friend of Shakspere, who

died in 1614, and is here buried near the altar. Under the north wall, within the communion-rail, is an enriched altar-tomb of earlier character; supposed to be that of Thomas Balshall, D. D. who rebuilt the chancel as at present, and died in 1491. The canopied recesses upon the surbase of this tomb, though now much injured, are freely designed, and have been skilfully finished; within them, at the south, are placed five groupes of figures, in relief; which severally represent—the scourging of Jesus, his bearing the cross, the crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection. This interesting tribute to the memory of the Saviour has, we regret to say, been wilfully—we trust ignorantly—much defaced in later times. In a like defacement the effigies of saints, and other sacred emblems, on its east and western sides, have also shared. Upon the ledge of the tomb the initials t. h. with the word Jhu. [Jesus] are repeated in relief: but the slab itself presents no vestige of an inlaid effigy and inscription, which sir William Dugdale considered in his time as having been "long since torn away." Indeed, we think it probable that the surface was purposely left smooth, in order that the tomb might be honored by being used as the credence-table* at the celebration of mass; and that it might also be employed upon the festival of Easter, as the sepulchre, whereon at that season a representation of the body of Jesus was usually laid.

* Where the wine and water to be mixed in the chalice, according to the Romish ritual, are placed before consecration is performed.

The stone *sedilia* opposite—where the priests were seated during a portion of the ancient altar-service—exhibit in their flowing canopies, lately restored, the hand of the same designer who decorated dean Balshall's tomb. The modern altar and its reredoss,—we have not here a *table*, as was institutionally employed,—though not inappropriate in style, are too diminutive and sideboard-like; and the contemporary floor of tiles is glazed till it resembles table-covering. The old oak seats, or misericords, though now thickly coated with paint, remain against the walls. They retain the usual quaint carvings under them, though their rich canopies have long since disappeared.

Returning westward, we find a portion of the north aile, toward the east, partitioned off, as a monumental chapel for the ancient family of Clopton, who formerly resided in the adjoining hamlet of that name, and afterward within the town. One of the tombs here,—which is altar-shaped, but without even a vestige of either inscription or effigy, is presumed, from arms within the arch above, to be a cenotaph to sir Hugh Clopton,—buried at St. Margaret's, Lothbury—whom we have already noticed as restorer of the adjoining transept. Against the north wall is another tomb, sustaining the recumbent effigies of William Clopton and Anne his wife: and on the east is the costly monument of George Carew, earl of Totness and baron Clopton, whose effigy with that of Joice his countess eldest daughter of the above William Clopton—here repose beneath a corinthian canopy, decorated with due heraldic insignia in gold and colors.

In the southern aile—formerly appropriated as a chantry to the priests of the adjacent college—there remained, till the recent alterations, the platform of the ancient altar, ascended by the usual steps; as also a slab upon its floor, said to be indented with five crosses pattee, which were probably cut on the day of consecration,—while the stone may even originally have been the altar-slab itself.* The whole of this elevation was, we are told, removed by the restoring architect; but the slab—which still retains the crosses—is preserved in the pavement, though concealed by the modern floor. Immediately adjoining are three *sedilia* for the chantry priests officiating at this altar. These are, as usual, wrought in stone, but their present luxuriant canopies are unfortunately mere copies from the originals, with their injured parts restored: the latter having been removed from their position, during the late repairs.

Abutting against the north wall of the chancel was formerly a building, in the position of a lesser transept, which—from an old print still extant, as well as the door-way which is remaining—seems to have been built originally as the sacristy; wherein were preserved the vestments, altar-furniture, and plate. Above it was a chamber, presumed to have been that noticed among the collegiate Institutes as—the "bed-chamber in the church," wherein the choristers were enjoined

* "These things being done, the great stone which covers the altar is fitted for it, and then anointed with oil in five places, and after the same manner with chrysm."—*Durandus* [on Ancient Consecrations], *copied in Dugdale.*

to sleep.* After the dissolution, the fabric was used in part as a charnel-house; and at the commencement of the present century, having been represented as in a decayed state, it was then entirely taken down. The removal—though not often such in similar instances—is here a great improvement, since it divests the exterior of the chancel of what must have appeared as an excrescence.

On quitting the Church, the western front, erected in a style of simple regularity, should not be passed by unregarded. A spacious central window occupies the greatest portion of the space beneath the embattled pine; and immediately above the door there still remain entire—though now unoccupied—three spiral-crowned recesses, which originally, doubtless, each contained sculpture emblematical of the personages to whom the church was dedicated at its foundation.

In noticing The College, once connected with this Church, we remark that, as we have before observed, the monastery at Stratford had become dissolved before the era of the norman conquest: and the present ecclesiastical structure being subsequent to the date of that institution, it continued, from the period of its foundation till after the reign of Edward the third, to be employed only as the parish church. The first step toward its being made collegiate was the endowment, in 1332, of a Chantry-chapel within its southern aile—then known as St. Thomas à Becket's,—by John de Stratford, before noticed, at that time bishop of

* College Institutes, cited in Dugdale's Warwickshire, p. 483.

Winchester, but ultimately archbishop of Canterbury. This endowment—which included the manor of Ingon with other hereditaments—was provided to maintain five priests, who were to celebrate divine service perpetually in the above aile or chapel—then newly-built by the same De Stratford—for the honor of God and the good estate of the founder and his relations, king Edward the third, the then bishop of the diocese, and their several predecessors. To this endowment was afterward added the Advowson of the rectory of Stratford, including all its chapelries, with an abundant increase in houses, lands, and other possessions.

After the due insurance of these liberal provisions, Ralph de Stratford, nephew of the founder, and himself bishop of London, built in 1352 for the residence of these five priests a mansion or college, of squared stone, upon land which adjoined the church-yard: after which king Henry the fifth confirmed all their privileges by royal charter. "So that now"—says Dugdale, adverting to the church as well as to its priests—"being thus fitted with a mansion, as also their revenues much increased, it was not long ere it had the reputation of a Church Collegiate; for by that title was the warden thereof presented in the first year of Henry the sixth."

During the reign of Henry the eighth, dean Colingwode, with the diocesan's assent, provided for four children as choristers for this chantry, who were daily to assist in the celebration of divine service therein. These children were to be lodged in the college,—but on no occasion to be sent into the town—to wait at

table, or to read to the members, when at meals, in the Bible or some other authentic book; but they were not to go into the buttery either "to draw beer for themselves or any body else." After dinner they were to be instructed in singing; and in the evening were to repair at an appointed hour to their "bedroom in the church;" not omitting, before they put off their clothes, to repeat certain formal prayers with "a loud voice," concluding with a misericord for the soul of their founder.

In the 37th of Henry the eighth this college, with similar foundations, was dissolved by authority of parliament; on which occasion its yearly value was certified as being then £127 18*s.* 9*d.*; which amount may, under all considerations, be regarded as equivalent to a yearly rental of at least £1200 in the present day. The college buildings seem from that time to have continued with the crown until the 4th of Edward the sixth, when the site was granted to Dudley, earl of Warwick; after whose attainder it was leased by queen Elizabeth for a term; at the expiration of which period, in the year 1596, the estate was sold to John Coombe, the friend of Shakspere, who had hitherto lived at Welcombe, but who after this purchase resided chiefly here.

No remains of the Collegiate Structure, which stood westward of the present church-yard, now appear. But as late as 1799 it was described as a building then "capacious, handsome, and strong;" and as surrounded by an extensive pleasure-ground,—part of which seems now to remain as grass-land in front of

a neat row of tenements lately built. The original appearance of such an edifice, with its quadrangle, hall, and private chapel, would have much resembled that of the minor colleges in our ancient universities; and its destruction has, we regret to add, deprived us of another old English feature in the immediate vicinity of Shakspere's dwelling-place.*

In returning from this quarter of the town toward the leading streets, the visitor will pass the Chapel of the Gild, which rears its ancient little tower opposite to "New Place." This chapel originated in a gild or ancient fraternity of burgesses. The members of such institutions being bound by certain rules, and contributing also to a fund to defray their needful expences. They had yearly feasts and neighbourlike meetings; and were usually licensed by the crown to build chantries, maintain priests, and frame ordinances. So early as 1296, Robert de Stratford—a brother of the founder of the college—who was for some years rector of Stratford, and afterward bishop of Chichester, obtained, with the brethren and sisters of this fraternity, license from the diocesan to found here a hospital and to erect a chapel for their use. The bishop also allotted to them the Augustinian Rule, with a corresponding habit; and the foundation was thenceforth called "the Hospital of the Holy Cross, in Stratford."

In the fifth year of Edward the third—1331—leave was obtained to amortize certain rents in the

* A sketch of the Building is preserved in the Gentleman's Magazine of April, 1808; but a more definite, though similar, view occurs in Wheler's History of Stratford, p. 91.

town, to this fraternity; but it is not till the reign of Henry the fourth that the king by letters patent licensed the brethren and sisters of this Gild, either to continue the same, or to commence a new fraternity to the honor of the Holy Cross and St. John the Baptist; and that they might likewise yearly choose eight eldermen from their society, who should elect a master with two proctors, of the gild, to take charge of its lands and revenue. These three were also empowered, with their successors, to provide two or more priests, to celebrate herein the divine offices. In return for the amplitude of this royal grant, king Henry the fourth was gratefully recognized by the fraternity as their honorary re-founder.

This association among the townspeople was doubtless popular; and its endowments were therefore from time to time proportionately increased. Once every year, too—at the auditing of their accounts—the whole fraternity, according to ancient custom, dined together, with their farmers and tenants. They now possessed lands, houses and rent-charges, in Stratford, Clifford, and Shottery; and in the reign of Edward the fourth the rectory of Little Wilmecote with its tithes were given them by Henry L'Isle and his wife, in order that the priests of the gild should daily in the first mass pray for them and their posterity. An inventory of the goods of this society, made in the fifteenth year of the same king, shows them to have been also rich in plate, for the use of their chapel and table.

At the dissolution of this fraternity, by statute of 37th Henry VIII. their revenue was then valued at

£50 1*s.* 11*d.* yearly: but, taking all things into account, the comparative worth would perhaps now approach nearer to an income of £800 a year. The society had also, in addition to their other property, a suitable residence for their priests, who were four in number. This structure adjoined their hall and chapel, and had in it, as we learn from Dugdale, five chambers, as also a garden and dove-house attached. Besides their priests, they had a chapel-clerk, and a schoolmaster, as also a steward, bailiff, and cook. After the dissolution, the bulk of the property remained with the crown, till in the seventh of Edward VI. the whole —including the chapel, hall, almshouses,* and school, together with the great tithe of the parish of Stratford, which had formerly pertained to the college—was granted by the king to the municipal corporation here; who are enjoined by charter to apply the rents and profits to charitable and public uses.

The Chapel connected with the gild—and forming an integrant part of the institution, as including priests who were to be employed in religious services —was founded in 1443. It stands in connection with the ancient Hall of the gild,—already noticed as remaining—and was rebuilt, with the exception of its chancel, in the latter part of the reign of Henry the seventh, by sir Hugh Clopton, whose residence was close at hand; to whose memory also a tablet is erected within this chapel, and of whom we have made

* These almshouses (the original hospital) are now severally occupied by twelve male and twelve female inmates.

mention before. The building forms a pleasing feature in the thoroughfare, seated at an angle of the main street; and includes an embattled tower at the west, a nave without ailes, having a porch at the north, with a chancel much lower than the nave and of an earlier style of architecture, eastward.

On entering, we find ourselves within a collegiate-looking chapel, which by a more appropriate arrangement of sittings, and a befitting substitute for its flat, chill, modern ceiling, might readily be made to appear in a much greater degree as it originally was—a pleasing specimen of the chastened style of our minor Tudor-age churches. We should like much to see the correct apprehension of the restorer of the neighbouring collegiate-church exhibited within this structure also.

When we add, that the interior of this interesting chapel was formerly covered with elaborate paintings in distemper,*—obliterated so recently as 1804—and that its elegantly-formed windows once likewise glowed harmoniously with histories, portraits, and armoury, in coloured glass,—of which Dugdale notices fragments in his day—the modern visitor may readily comprehend the brilliant yet subdued and rich effect which, when thus perfected, a view of the interior must have conveyed. Much of this rich appearance would have remained when Shakspere was a scholar in his native town, and taught too—if not within this chapel, which *has* been so employed—yet

* Copied in colors by Fisher, and published in quarto by Bohn, with Descriptions by Nichols.

in the adjoining room.* Even the small corbel-heads, introduced among the canopies against the wall—which, though now much injured, are said to represent the human countenance at seven stages,—were neither overlooked by him nor lost. Did he not amplify their silent story, in the memorable recital, by the sentimental Jaques, of the "seven ages" of man's earthly history?

In such manner does the memory of the Poet invest with interest every object that can be connected with him, through however devious a course, that even the oak panelling removed from this chapel at the refitting of its seats—where taken from that particular pew recognized as "Shakspere's" from having belonged to the dwelling at New Place—is hoarded as a relic: so that from a portion of it, duly authenticated by certificate, our host at "the Falcon" preserves among his treasures a small copy of the monumental bust, cut in this timber, against which it is possible that the head of the original was accustomed at one period gravely to recline.

One circumstance may well be regarded as having contributed to preserve this chapel from the destruction that involved so many similar edifices, at a

* The fraternity had been dissolved about twenty years before the poet's birth: yet it would be some time after that event, before much of the internal decorations of this chapel were removed. For even as late as forty years after the above era, Harrison in his Description of England, writing in 1586, informs us that "the stories in glasse windowes" then remained; because of the "want of sufficient store of new stuffe, and the extreame charge that should grow by the alteration of the same into white panes throughout the realme."

time when they were often bought for the sake of their materials, from the king.* At the general survey of 1534—the year preceding the suppression of the lesser religious houses—the commissioners report this chapel as then resorted to by many poor and infirm people of the town, as well as the members of the gild; because the parish-church, "situate out of the town, is so far distant from a great part thereof." Fortunate it is that the latter fact was not omitted in the statement; otherwise, not Stratford only, but the nation would doubtless, under some pretence, have been deprived of this interesting fabric with its accompaniments,—not omitting among these, its funds. For at that period, neither the serious reformation of religion, nor any elevation of the character of the people, was considered by the court. The sole desire of the sovereign being the attainment of irresponsible domination in church and state, together with a personal perversion of vast endowments, originally *designed* to further the most important interests of the nation.

* "Such whales have I heard on a' the land, who never leave gaping, till they've swallow'd the whole parish,—church, steeple, bells, and all."—*Shakspere.* Pericles, ii. i.

III.

THE POET'S RURAL HAUNTS.

[Ann Hathaway's Home.]

SHOTTERY AND LUDDINGTON— CHARLCOTE, HAMPTON-LUCY, AND ALVESTON— CLOPTON, AND WELCOMBE-HILL.

Among the peaceful and sequestered spots round Stratford which still retain much of old-English usages, and further are associated in our early thoughts with the career of Shakspere,—the nearest, and to us the one which ought to be first visited, is Shottery; the dwelling-place of Ann Hathaway, "the substantial yeoman's daughter," who afterward became the poet's wife.

The hamlet, for such it is, is within the extensive parish of Stratford, and is readily arrived at by a walk that branches off near the church-turn. This soon conducts us to the fields across which our great

precursor often walked at even-tide; at which season we, too, happened for the first time to cross them. The trimness of modern farming has recently done much to change the accompaniments of the pathway; though the course itself can be but little altered from that of yore.

On reaching the place, we find the dwellings numerous, and most of them conveniently detached by intervening garden-ground; so that the hamlet stretches over a considerable space. In most instances, too, little has been done to impair the character of the tenements; which are still chiefly timber-framed, as in the poet's day. The memory of this, its most important, visitor, seems to be yet cherished by the inmates; judging, among other circumstances, from that sign—"The Shakespeare Tavern"—which, from yon rustic alehouse, invites the straggler to its cool stoned-kitchen, its little boarded "parlour,"—or adjoining rural skittle-ground, fringed with Ophelian pansies and columbines and herb-grace. But leaving this, and having crossed the brook, we gain sight of the dwelling we are searching after. Its aspect is that of a roomy old farm-house, divested of its former home-stead, and altered in other respects. It stands upon a bank, and has in front a rudely-paved terrace, to which we ascend by steps.

The walls are roughly framed with timber, the intervals in which are mostly filled with wattling and rude plaister,—laths being of later date; and the high-pitched roof is snugly covered in with moss-grown thatch. The orchards, which till recently ad-

joined the house, are now severed from the premises; and the old garden between them is rooted up, the present being of yesterday's construction.

Within the dwelling, we find the kitchen as of old —then the chief living-room—retaining still its ample hearth and roomy chimney-corners, where in winter-time the coziest seats were reserved for the heads of the household and an occasional guest: and that old straight-backed elbow-chair now standing in it—1847 —looks verily as though it had but just been occupied by Him who was wont to visit here two-hundred and sixty years since. A recess behind it, screened by a latticed door of oak, retains the initials I H. E H. and I B. which are interpreted as being those of John Hathaway, Elizabeth his wife, and the joiner. The walls exhibit portions of the black oaken wainscoat, with which the rough plaistering was formerly concealed; while the rude stone-floor, the low ceiling with its heavy beams, the unpainted doors and wooden latch, are alike primitive and in character. In a room above, remains an old oak-carved bedstead of the Tudor or Stuart times; and in an adjoining chest is preserved a nearly contemporary sample of heavy homespun bed-linen, marked E H; the needle-wrought ornamenting of which, may justly cause even our lady wool-workers of the day to admire the taste and patience of their great-great-grandmothers.

Before we leave, the meadow behind the house should not be overlooked, especially in the summer season. It presents to us a rich specimen of the teeming English glebe, unaltered in its general features,

and—as the setting sun streams over its luxuriant greensward—looking as it was wont to do in the days of staid Queen Bess, when *other* footsteps threaded that twining path before us which seems to promise such a rich track inland to the time-unshackled rambler.

From the residence we have now left, Ann Hathaway was escorted by her lover—himself not nineteen summers old—to a church within the parish of Stratford, where they were married, by licence dated 28th November, 1582; at which time the bride was twenty-six. Now, though other entries connected with the poet occur in the Stratford register, yet no entry of his marriage appears. Neither is it in any degree certain that this event took place in the mother-church. And for our own part—for reasons connected with the date of their first-born, upon which we shall not dwell—we are of opinion that the marriage was performed in a situation more retired than that: and in accordance with a local tradition, we therefore regard the adjoining chapelry of Luddington as the spot where the wedding took place. "What does the Luddington register say?" will naturally be inquired. That register is gone; and thus has perished the test of this tradition.

But we will, while here, presently walk on to Luddington,—though others may, if they please, ride thither; for the way is good, as well as pleasant. It is a village nook upon the Avon side, and the name of Shakspere hallows it; as likewise, the assurance that to so retired and near a spot, the poet and his future bride must have often strolled together, in the

days when love was young, and hope was bright, and no cloud of disappointment yet loomed over them.

On our way out of Shottery into the turnpike road, which we must cross for Luddington, we fancy that the walk from hence to Stratford church—there is none now nearer—must be often impracticable to many in the hamlet, whose parish church that still is. A like consideration seems to have arisen in another mind, so long back as in the reign of Henry IV. For Dugdale tells us, that in the fourth year of that king, John Harewell, esq. then lord of the manor here, obtained the bishop's licence "to have divine service celebrated by a fitting priest, in the oratory within his manor-house here." Upon which circumstance the antiquary cautiously observes, that this care of the bishop was authorized by a constitution, no less ancient than the emperor Justinian's time; whereby men were forbidden "to have the sacred mysteries administered in their private chapels, lest under that pretence heretics should do secretly those things which are unlawful;" or—as he afterward expresses it in quoting a later constitution—"lest men should secretly receive from heretics, instead of food, the bane of their souls, —pollution instead of expiation."

Yon low brick building with pointed windows next the street, which stands in the middle of the hamlet, is we presume—in connection with nonconformant teaching—a modern substitute for the ancient oratory and licenced clerk, who were to defend Shottery from what now forms in part the religion of the kingdom, but which in that day both church and state denounced

as damnable heresy—the doctrinal opinions of the self-thinking and magnanimous WICLIFF.

A firm carriage-way across the meadows, diverges at the left from the turnpike road, through a gate a little beyond Shottery. This brings us, with a slight deviation, to the soft margin of the river, here considerably increased by its junction with the Stow in its course between us and Stratford. But leaving the widened stream, with its rude lock, and foaming weir, and thickened beds of rush and osier, we turn into the meadow near, and are soon in the straggling and loosely-defined street of LUDDINGTON. This, like Shottery is a hamlet subordinate to Stratford ; but it had in Shakspere's time its own parochial chapel,* where, though dependent upon Stratford as the mother-church, the rites of baptism, marriage and burial were occasionally celebrated. But there is no such chapel now ; not a wreck remains of it. Even its burial-ground is become a fertile garden, near the blacksmith's shop ; giving no other intimation of its ancient use, than that conveyed by the fragments of human bone occasionally turned up in it. Fifty years ago—as we gathered from an ancient inmate—the chapel, though in ruins, was standing in its own kirk-yard. When or by what authority was it secularized and destroyed? Where, too, went its brief

* As early as April, 1420, a presentation to this chapelry is recorded by Dugdale to have been made by the warden of the College at Stratford, at the altar of St. Thomas the martyr in the mother-church.—One of the masters of Stratford school during Shakspere's youth was also curate of Luddington.

Register, which might even set at rest the query—"Where was the poet wedded?"

We can vary our walk back, by following the towing-path beside the Avon. This brings us, at about half way, in front of a rich hanging wood, clothing the somewhat precipitous sides of a high bank, that rises from the opposite side of the river, and stretches right and left, so as partially to shut in the—here considerably widened—stream, which just at this spot looks almost lake-like. The spire of Stratford is next seen, pointing peacefully above the thick foliage of the rounded trees; and passing afterward by the substantial but rural foot-bridge near the mill, across the river—constructed, as the date informs us, so long ago as 1599—we are again within the town.

CHARLCOTE, HAMPTON-LUCY, AND ALVESTON.

The Park at Charlcote is so fixedly connected with the career of Shakspere, that neither apology, nor explanation, nor asserted incredulity—as regards the tradition annexed to it—can suffice to disassociate that legend from the domain. And therefore no spot, except the birth and burial places of the poet, is so punctiliously visited by all incomers to Stratford and its proximity, as this scene of youthful daring on the part of "the man of men." The whole nation of his countrymen thus virtually deferring to the old-english-like tradition that exalts in their estimation the then

untrammelable and caution-spurning vivacity of their after-teacher. Thus do the very freaks and pranks of unaffected genius impart an everliving interest to the palace and the hovel in like degree: for what would the world care for Charlcote,—save here and there some lonely lover of woodland scenery—were not the poet believed to have invaded its enclosure, and to have been confronted with the owner in yon knightly hall?

The character of Shakspere, in early but well developed manhood, was joyous, enterprising, and social. His was the ardent and impassioned mind, inspiriting a vigorous frame, cheered by the equanimity of health and sustained in action by a bounding tide of animal spirits, which few considerations had power either to restrain or depress. At this period, the lauded daredevilry of the day amongst the roistering youths of Stratford, seems to have been a re-vivification of the old Robin-Hood-pastime of capturing deer. The arena of their prowess in such feats was the park at Charlcote; but the moral difference between their own position and that of the injured Saxon, seems to have been overlooked, while imitating *one* popular feature of his career. In one or more of these innovations, Shakspere was, we consider, a party concerned: and the anger of the proprietor—sir Thomas Lucy—on discovering the depredators, seems to have been increased by the recklessness of the youthful Shakspere; who, lad-like, derided the threats of the knight,—either by scribbling at the gate of his park, or by some equally unmistakeable mode of personal ridicule.

The position of sir Thomas as a justice of the peace, and the course he seems thus to have been urged into against the youth,—at a period when justices were not at all times so precise as the ever-present Press of England tends to preserve them now—at length sufficed to determine the young man—though apparently then newly married—to leave Stratford, at least for a time. Not that we consider this as by any means the sole occasion of such a removal; which certainly *did* take place about this time, from whatever cause determined upon. We have our own opinion respecting the prudential character of his youthful marriage to one some years his senior, and the not improbable result, as regards domestic happiness, that might in the course of two years have ensued. We state *this* term, because it seems not to have been till after February, 1584,* that the removal of Shakspere to London, unaccompanied by any of his own household, took place. It is indeed highly probable that his views had even previously been directed toward the London stage; not as a writer, but as a performer. For two contemporary actors of eminence upon those boards—Burbage and Greene—were natives of Stratford or its vicinity; and these had, we conceive, been previously included among, if they were not in fact

* The marriage was in November, 1582,—and in February, 1584, when his second and third children, Hamnet and Judith (twins completing his family) were born, Shakspere, then not one-and-twenty, is proved by the registry to have been at that time resident in Stratford. The son died before his father (in 1596 when about eleven), but both the daughters survived their father.

the principals of, those London players who from time to time visited Stratford, as we have seen. Upon whatever grounds decided on, certain it however is that not long after the date above-mentioned, Shakspere was himself an actor on the London stage, personating such characters, in particular, as demanded dignity of form ;* and in 1589 his name appears in a certificate of privy-council as one of the shareholders in the theatre at Blackfriars there. This position as a theatrical proprietor, doubtless tended to promote the conception, completion, and publication of those dramatic compositions, which by their superior character soon effectually changed the tone and manner of the English stage.

Even apart from the ever-vivid associations that cling to it, Charlcote is alone a spot to interest the traveller in his way. The road to it is delightful, and the place, only to look upon, is worth a journey of some miles. To walk to it—the distance from Stratford being about four miles—we cross the Avon by Clopton's bridge, and pursuing the road, *leave* the hamlet of Tiddington and village of Alveston on the left; because those we can look into on our way back, which we shall then change. Soon after leaving Alveston new church, upon our left, a path through the fields leads us into Charlcote park ; and here—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot,"

we tread with buoyant spirit its thick elastic turf,

* "Viz. kings, the athletic, though aged follower [Adam] of an athletic young man, and supernatural beings."—*De Quincey's Memoir.*

threading our way, among the dappled deer, under low-boughed wide-spread beeches, towering pines, and matted elms. Among these leafy clumps and avenues we catch at length a cheering glimpse of the dark-bricked mansion, which rears its antique gables, high turrets, and clustering chimney-stacks, beyond the river's bank—while the stream itself here sparkles in front of us on its winding track. What a release at early morn is this—

'To one long time in pop'lous city pent,'

—or ancient town, scarce less restrictive: the weather glorious, the season May,—right worthy to be called so—the time our own, unchecked and unencroachable. The day, in such a case, looks on—a year of time; thought revels free, round an infinity of subjects; the spirit spurns its every-day restraint, asserts its native freedom, and soars untrammeled through its own faery land of hope, imagination, expectancy and enjoyment.

Reverting to our track, the footway through the park leaves the house at a distance on the left, and brings us on our course into a shady lane that skirts the park through which we have passed. This is a continuation of the road whence we diverged, and will lead us direct toward the village. Pursuing it, we reach an appropriate bridge of stone, crossing a tributary stream of Avon, near to the gardens. Here on either hand, the road is fringed with a thick copse of ever-verdant hollies intermixed with box and juniper; even the firs, too, that rise above, have their

[Charlcote.]

stems concealed by ivy,—while high over head the mass is crowned by the deep shadows of the spreading elms, rich in their summer foliage.

An ample gate, amidst the paling, now opens from the road upon the principal avenue to the mansion. This leads to a spacious gatehouse of dark red brick, with turrets at the angles,—which fronts the house at some distance, like an ancient castle-barbican. The intervening space—bounded in front by true Elizabethan turrets and balustrading—is fitly planted out in flower-parterres, as a *pleasance* or knotted garden. Through this a carriage-way leads up to the hall of entrance, which is lighted by those three bay-windows near the porch. The mansion—which is kept in admirable repair—was built of brick, much as it now appears, in the first year of Elizabeth's reign, by sir Thomas Lucy; and it is still, in every respect, a venerable example of the princely dwellings of our old English gentry. It is, further, equally gratifying to add, that it is yet the property of a commoner—Fulk Lucy, esq. at present, we believe, a minor.

The house is not what is termed a "show-house;" and knowing this, we had no desire to encroach upon its quietude. But in requesting permission to make a drawing from the grounds, we had then opportunity to stand within that Hall, from whence we could not —if we would have done so—disassociate the scene of Shakspere's confrontation with the angry knight of yore. It is a noble room, well proportioned and almost chapel-like; with high coved roof and bright armorial windows: but with an added glow of color

and gilding on the walls, which, with a bright Italian pavement, is more associated with modern finishing.

Leaving the mansion, we turn from the gateway along a narrow avenue of elms—grass-grown and looking like a pathway to the sepulchre—which leads direct into the Churchyard. In approaching the church we are sorry to perceive that though in reality an ancient structure, yet its distinctive character is wholly gone; frittered away by inappropriate additions and alterations. Even the tower—though curious when examined from within, on account of its strong timber-construction—is so be-plaistered, be-windowed and be-roofed, as to look from without little better than a dovecote.

We enter beneath a low round-headed doorway, which with another opposite, now closed up, tells of an anglo-norman origin. The font also belongs to a like period; being a cylinder, narrowing toward the base, with a wide lead-lined cavity. One flat stone in the pavement retains the inlaid effigy of an ancient priest—vested for the altar, bearing on his breast the chalice and paten—with a brief inscription under, acquainting us that he was "Johannes Marsker," chaplain of this church, and imploring for his soul the divine mercy. There are some ancient oak sittings in the nave, appropriated to the parishioners; but the whole remaining space is occupied by vast memorials of the Lucy family, before which the ancient character of the structure has fallen entire.

Walking onward through the village street, we mark with pleasure the airy and convenient aspect of

the cottages ; appropriately built of brick, with intervening gardens, and a school-house among them : a proof that the owner justly regards one part of the service by which he holds his land to be that of providing fitting residences for those who cultivate it.

Turning, beyond the church, into another wooded lane that skirts the park, we resume our shaded walk, till we reach the Avon at the foot of it. Here we cross the river by a convenient bridge, the iron outline of which is softened by the approximating foliage of the park, which we must here bid farewell to. But, before we do so, we cannot but remark that the angle here seems just the spot from whence—in time of yore—to have winged a shaft amongst the antlered inmates. What a place too, for hide-and-seek with the park-keeper! upon the confines of the domain, at the river's brink, and among those brambles, rushes, and alders. Why, after all the ink that has been sputtered about the *turpitude* of this woodland freak on the part of earlier Stratfordians, is it a wonder to us that when our countrymen were archers, they should occasionally have sought a more saltatory target than one of wheat-straw.

Having passed the bridge, we are at once within the adjoining village of Hampton, distinguished from others of that class or order by the added family name of "Lucy"—Hampton Lucy. So clean, so peaceful, so sequestered is the spot, that it seems, while we walk through it, as though care and poverty must surely here be strangers. A clump of stately elms stands in the middle of the airy village street, and under them

we pass into the churchyard. The present church is wholly modern; it occupies the site of a former structure, but presents neither vestige nor indication of the ancient character of the earlier pile. A more town-pattern specimen of present church-construction we scarcely remember to have hit upon beyond the precincts of paved streets; fenced-in, too, with a row of iron palisading, like the formal burial grounds of crowded cities. A commodious school-house is erected near, bearing the Lucy arms in front: a pleasing testimony of the same family's regard toward the dwellers upon this portion of their patrimony.

Desirous of varying our return to Stratford, we leave the street of Hampton on our right, and pursue our course again in a direction toward the river. This we reach—after a mile's walk through wide and fertile meadows—near a bank termed Hatton Brake, rising abruptly from the stream, and thickly overarched with knotted elm and feathery ash, intermixed with hawthorns and alder. Descending hence, we cross the rush-fringed stream, now overhung with osiers, wreathed too with the flowering branches of the sweet briar-rose, and leaving the ferry-boat are landed in the broad pasture-grounds of ALVESTON.

We see a tower in front, reminding us of a trim modern gothic church in Alveston which we passed on our road to Charlcote, in the morning. But that seemed to stare coldly toward the road, and far away from the houses of the village. We therefore naturally inquire, as we approach those nestling dwellings,—Where the old church stood? and find, in our way,

the original church-yard, with its graves and grave-stones, far from the modern structure, and wholly undisturbed. Not so the church which hallowed it. Of that we find only the lettered floor, now grass-grown; beyond which occurs a plaistered remnant, newly-tiled and glazed, embodying all that now remains of the original chancel. A curious bas-relief, some three feet long, cut in hard freestone, is preserved among this plaistering at the west; its execution is inexpressibly rude, and the subject, for aught we know, ante-diluvial. For the two fighting monsters most conspicuous, resemble no class with which we are acquainted in later zoology. Another curious relic is also preserved on the south side. This is semi-circular, of the same material as the last, and rests upon two capitals divested of their pillars; having originally formed the head of a small doorway. The subjects here are in relief, but the workmanship is somewhat better. There are two strange quadrupeds, *gardent* as the heralds say, in the upper part; and below is a female figure, habited in a rich costume, surrounded by rows of bow-knots in conjunction with very involved lacing or cordage.

We now regain the turnpike road that leads us into Stratford; and as we cast a parting glance back on the objects of our day's excursion, while we re-cross the bridge that leads into the street, we gratefully exclaim in the *spirit* of a distant visitor—a well-thumbed copy of whose "Sketch-Book" may be found in all the libraries near—'The prism of poetry has this day tinged every object in the landscape with rainbow hues; and

I have been surrounded with fancied beings conjured up by poetic power, but permanently endued with the charm of reality.'—Yes! the spring verdure of the rich country we have passed over has whispered its influence upon our mind in the language of His sonnets; the vestiges of elder usages which we have met, have beamed upon us as interpretative of His allusions; facts in natural history hitherto new to us, have enlarged our acquaintanceship with the teeming stores of His earlier observation: while even the hymnings in the woodlands have—throughout the day, the mellow evening, and the softened night—sung of His rich imaginings. And in the yet unpublished lines of a brother-rambler, on a similar occasion, it may be asked and answered—

"What sang they—these immortal quiristers
And what the various import of their tone?
Now seemed it fair Fidelio's requiem—
Anon Ophelia's strain urged on the soul
A mournful sweetness. Ariel laughed aloud,
And so brought joy again!—or perhaps mad mirth,
Like Robin's gambols, made us long to hear
Some sadder song take ill-timed mirth away.
Thus changing cadences, like His who drew
Each passion into life, gushed from the voice
Of nature thro' the sweet melodious throats
Of these her ministers.—All that we saw
Or in the softened shadows of the night,
Or gathered from the odoriferous breeze,—
All thought, all feeling seemed but this alone—
Song's mightiest empire spreading everywhere:
God's word in man and nature still the same.
Thus closed the day sacred to Shakspere's name!"

CLOPTON AND WELCOMBE-HILL.

Welcombe, adjoining Stratford toward the north-east, is another spot in the vicinity associated with the memory of Shakspere. Here dwelt his old associate and familiar friend, John Combe, whom, with his brother William, the poet often visited here.

Some of the gossips who during the last century loved to comment on the few brief traditions they could furbish up respecting Shakspere, have given to Combe the character of a penurious usurer; on account of a jocular impromptu *said* to have been once uttered among a social groupe by his companion Shakspere. Doubtless in such-like gatherings, hard hits were often made amidst the general glee; and those who hazarded them occasionally learned that 'such as play at bowls must expect rubs in the way.' Of this our friend John Combe was perhaps often made aware from the replies of his companion Shakspere. But that the warm-hearted and generous nature of the poet would have tolerated a continued intimacy on the part of an extortionate old hunks,—as some would fain represent Combe to have been—carries its own refutation. But Shakspere's intimacy with him continued till death; when Combe by will bequeathed to him five pounds: and the latter, at his decease, evinced his respect for his memory by a bequest to William Combe, the son, of his sword. The inscription on Combe's monument in Stratford chancel also

enumerates, among his charitable bequests, £100,—we may quadruple these monetary sums, to estimate what would now be their availability,—to be lent to poor traders of the town, at the then extraordinarily moderate interest of *two-and-a-half* per cent. which interest was also to be applied to charitable uses. Here then, for once, we see that a man's epitaph may *really* subserve his memory.

An animating walk, by way of CLOPTON, is this to Welcomb Hill. From that part of the town toward Henley, a path through luxuriant meads and under flowering hedge-rows, leads to a lengthened bank near Clopton House, which commands one of the best views of the town from a distance. The mansion here —lying, in accordance with ancient views of snugness, in a sheltered hollow—was in Shakspere's time the manorial hall of Stratford, being then the residence of the Clopton family, the esquires of the parish. Their tombs, effigies, and hatchments, we have already seen grouped together in an aile of the church, as those of the most important family in the place. The mansion had stood here, shrouded in its quiet nook, as far back as the reign of Edward the first: and the site had been occupied even earlier by the same family. It had also its ancient oratory within, allowed by licence from the bishop in the reign of Edward the fourth; and soon after this a fair chapel was built here by Thomas Clopton, son of him who constructed the oratory: which Thomas obtained "by special suit to pope Sextus IV." permission for himself and heirs to have divine service celebrated therein. Until a

recent period, too, the mansion still exhibited the projecting angles, clustering chimney-shafts, and high peaked gables, appropriate to such a structure.

In Mr. Howitt's "Visits to Remarkable Places," the ancient dwelling—then in course of alteration—is there noticed as "a large, heavy, compact, square brick-building, of that deep red almost approaching to purple." It had then in front a spacious court-yard, entered through a gateway, the massive pillars of which seem to have been surmounted—like those of the Baron of Bradwardine—by grim heraldic monsters; and within, the old place was just such as naturally gives rise to startling legends. It had also its haunted chamber, wherein there hung a portrait —"singularly beautiful"—of Charlotte Clopton; a lovely member of the family, who during an epidemic sickness had been too hastily interred in Stratford church, and who—upon shortly after interring there another of the family—was discovered by the gleam of the sepulchral torch, leaning in her grave-clothes against the wall; dead, at last; but not until in the agonies of hunger and despair she had bitten a piece from her own fair shoulder! Here also was a secret chapel constructed in the framework of the roof by a Roman catholic owner, during the rigid penal laws against that mode of worship—whether practised conscientiously or otherwise. But now, by a very recent change of ownership, the charm of ancient character and old association is invaded, if not utterly destroyed; the residence being wholly Italianized by Mr. Warde, a later owner.

Leaving the spot, we keep along the hill toward Welcombe, till we meet on the right with a most remarkable instance of ancient entrenching. It is even now of considerable depth, and so dug out, with amazing labour, as to leave a tortuous path, some furlongs long, commanded at successive intervals by projecting mounds, thrown forward from either side into the pathway: so that an attempt to thread the passage would instantly have exposed invaders to assailants from every side. Within this circumvallation rises a natural hill, rounded by art, and occupying the position of a citadel. Whether intended for purposes of worship or defence, these vast earthworks must claim a distant, if not a Celtic origin. At all events they impress us with a sense of the energetic perseverance of earlier Britons, before railway cuttings and embankments employed the like energy and endurance in after days. It is remarkable that no account appears to be given by any of our old writers of these laborious entrenchments. A spear head was found among them in digging some few years back, as also a coin of the Saxon Ethelred, known as "the Unready." The latter, which was surprisingly perfect, was formerly in the possession of the late Captain Saunders, of Stratford.

We issue from these excavations—which are fortunately, for the most part, still bare, with the exception of their russet turf—into a trim plantation, and upon a smooth carriage-drive bordered by scattered masses of the deep-gold furze that blooms so luxuriantly in this part of Warwickshire. This private road leads

on the left to the elevated site of Welcombe Lodge—originally, we apprehend, the location of John Combe's rural dwelling. But of that structure, or even a later which might have occupied its site, no portion now remains; unless it be a fragment of some recent picture gallery—erected, or partly taken down—it matters not which—by the last proprietor, before the transfer of this estate to Mark Phillips, esq. the present owner. The same drive leads on the right into the Warwick road from Stratford: and at the gates, quitting the Welcombe Estate, where the Combes resided—where, too, Shakspere himself was afterwards a proprietor—having purchased largely here from the Combe family, in 1602—we soon find ourselves in the way for "New Place" and threading again the streets of Stratford.

IV.

THE ANCIENT AND THE MODERN TOWN.

[Victoria Spa and Baths.]

ANCIENT STRATFORD—THE MODERN TOWN—ITS SPA AT BISHOPTON.

At the Survey of Domesday the manor of Stratford was held by Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, within which extensive diocese it, as now, then was; and the extent at which the manor was assessed, was fourteen hides and a half; which may be estimated at about fifteen-hundred acres of our present measure. The mill then paid, as its yearly rent, ten *solidi* in specie —weighing, together, the half of a silver-pound— and also a thousand eels: and the entire value of the manor is recorded as being then xxv. *libræ*, or pounds of coined silver, yearly.

Its adult inhabitants at this early period, are returned as twenty-one *villani*, or tenants by servitude, seven *bordarii*, or cotter-tenants, and one priest, [*cu. pbr̄o:*]—from whence we gather that there was then a church, or at least a chapel, provided for the simple tenantry. What a pleasing *picture* of the olden time is here presented to us! Some thirty householders located here upon the margin of the Avon, engaged in the culture of the soil for the supply of their moderate wants, and yielding a like service on the demesne of their episcopal lord; who, on his part, provides for them a resident teacher—to confirm themselves and train their little ones in the way of knowledge and of truth. Such is the charm wherewith the poetry of our nature readily invests the recollections of those early times. But the reality differed much from this representation. The mental aspirations of the community were in a considerable degree repressed; and he who should have cherished these, was himself but a mere sayer of *other* men's prayers,—mayhap a reader, too, of homilies by other men—instead of one freely giving utterance to the voice divine within the heart.

A weekly market was granted to Stratford by Richard the first, in the seventh of his reign. At about the same period, the bishop of Worcester, as lord of the fee, apparently desirous to elevate the character of "his burgesses of Stratford," agreed to confer upon them the inheritance of their burgages, and at the same time to relieve them from all their former services—often in such cases servile as well as personal—

on condition of their each paying to him and his successors the sum of twelve *denarii*—amounting to rather more than half an ounce of coined silver—by equal payments of a fourth of that sum at each of the four great feasts. To every one of his burgages here, he at the same time allowed twelve perches of land, three perches and a half wide, with freedom from toll, according to the custom of Bristol, there cited: the grant concludes by denouncing excommunication against all who should infringe these privileges. This procedure on the part of their lord, at such a period, would necessarily affect not only the condition of serfship here, but that of slavery also; for in that degraded state—even after this period—many of the Saxon race were held in bondage by the Normans: although the church unhesitatingly denounced the abuse, as anti-christian.

In 1214—being the sixteenth year of the reign of John—the first yearly fair was granted to the town of Stratford. This was to begin on the even of Holy Trinity, and was to continue during the next two days. The fairs at present held here are in the months of January, March, May, September, and November.

As an early rate for road-mending, a toll was granted in 1331—being the fifth year of Edward the third—upon certain commodities vended in the town, to the then Parson of Stratford, as at that time the most important personage here. The amount of this toll was to be applied toward the cost of paving, or rather of pitching, the roadway through the town.

From a valuation of the manor in the nineteenth

of Edward the first, 1291, we find that 140 acres of arable land in the parish, were at that time let by the bishop of Worcester at five-pence, of the money of the period, per acre yearly; and that twenty-seven acres of meadow-land were at the same time let at two shillings and sixpence yearly.* The manor of Stratford continued with the bishops of Worcester, till the reign of Edward the sixth; when in the third year of that king—1549—bishop Nicholas Heath exchanged it with the then earl of Warwick—afterward duke of Northumberland—for lands in Worcestershire. Upon the duke's attainder, the manor was confiscated, and after certain grants reverted to the crown. It was ultimately conveyed by Charles the second to Charles, earl of Dorset and Middlesex, in whose family the manor, with the patronage of the vicarage—the corporation being the lay-rectors—still remains.

From the evils too often attending parliamentary borough elections—hitherto but partially ameliorated by recent measures of reform—Stratford has, happily, been always free: it not being recorded that representatives have been, upon any occasion, sent hence to serve in parliament. In the seventh of Edward the sixth, the town was municipally incorporated by royal charter, dated 28th June, 1553: but no right to return parliamentary representatives is there either acknowledged or conferred. The local officers directed to be chosen by that charter were bailiffs, aldermen, and burgesses. Even in later charters, granted here

* Wheler's History of Stratford, p. 11.

by the Stuart family—anxious as they usually were to augment the royal influence in the house of commons,—parliamentary rights are still omitted. In the last from Charles the second, in 1674, the government was vested in a mayor, aldermen, and burgesses. Under the recent municipal act, the governing body consists of a mayor, four aldermen, and twelve town councillors. It is under king Edward's charter that the corporation retains the possessions of the dissolved college and of the gild: they being also enjoined therein to maintain from thence a vicar, a curate, a schoolmaster, and twenty-four alms-people; as also to repair the bridge, and other public structures.

During the reign of Elizabeth, Stratford suffered severely from two destructive fires; one of which occurred in 1593, and the other in the year following. During these calamities,—houses in towns being then chiefly composed of wood, and in many instances roofed with straw or rushes—the destruction must have been fearful: and we find that as many as two-hundred dwelling-houses were consumed on these occasions. In 1614, the town was a third time in danger of being destroyed by fire: this took place on the 9th of July, and consumed fifty-four houses, with many barns and offices. Interpreters of the Providential causes of natural calamity,—like the rebuked denouncers on an earlier occasion, of "the galileans" whose blood Pilate had shed amidst their sacrifices*—seem not to have been lacking then,—nor are they in our own time,

* Gospel by Luke, chapt. xiii. *v.* 1.

either. Thus we find an incumbent at Evesham then taking upon himself to declare that two, if not three, of these conflagrations were inflicted "chiefly for profaning the Lord's sabbaths, and for contemning his word."*

Quitting the age of Normans, Plantagenets, and Tudors, and regarding Stratford as it is now appears, we find the town—which in 1765 contained a population of only 2287—numbering at present, according to the last census, a population of 6022; of which, 3321 were within the limits of the borough. The parish is in the diocese and archdeaconry of Worcester; and its ecclesiastical limits are unusually wide, including within them—according to Dugdale—Welcombe, Clopton, Ingon, Bishopton, Drayton, Dodwell, Shottery, Luddington, Rhyne-Clifford, Little-Wilmecote, Bridge-town, and Bushwood.

Of the modern structures erected for public use in Stratford, the Town-Hall is one of the principal. This is distinct from the gild-hall, previously noticed, which stands at some distance. It was originally erected in 1633, some years after the grant of the first municipal charter: and as it stood on stone pillars—as then usual—the lower portion was occupied as a market, having a gaol at one end, and a pillory at the other. In 1767, that building, being decayed, was for the most part taken down; and the present hall of stone, in the Tuscan style of architecture, was

* The Practice of Piety, by Lewis Bayly, minister of All-saints, Evesham.

erected by subscription in the following year. Upon the north front is a life-size statue of Shakspere, presented to the town by Garrick, in 1769. Within is a spacious assembly-room, having a whole-length portrait of Shakspere, by Wilson, at one end, and a corresponding one of Garrick at the other. The latter is by Gainsborough, and was presented by the actor; whose lady also contributed to the decoration of the apartment, by designing and presenting the lustres arranged against the walls. A smaller room, or council-chamber, adjoining, is at present partly occupied by the Mechanics' Institution of the town. In this apartment is a striking portrait of a cook-maid, the scene of whose operations was the spacious kitchen, belonging to the corporation, below.

The THEATRE is appropriately situate within the garden-ground of "New Place;" that scene of retirement, where, in the maturity of Shakspere's life, we may justly conclude that some of his chief productions were finished for the stage.* The building was erected in 1830, and is excellently arranged; being also at the same time compact and airy. Though so much unlike the huge and glittering interiors of our

* "It is established that Othello was performed in 1602; Hamlet, greatly enlarged, was published in 1604; Measure for Measure was acted before the court on St. Stephen's night in the same year. If we place Shakspere's partial retirement from his professional duties about this period, and regard the plays whose dates up to this point have not been fixed by any authentic record or satisfactory combination of circumstances, we have abundant work in reserve for the great poet in the maturity of his intellect."—*Knight's Biography of Shakspere*, 8vo. page 484.

present well-appointed London houses, yet we know of no apartment wherein,—even excluding its unique localization—we would prefer to witness one of Shakspere's dramas. The attention, undistracted by the often too elaborated accompaniments of space, spectâcle, and scenery, would here be concentrated—where we know it *should* be—upon the actors and the piece. And then, between the acts, instead of universal discord in the house, to pace the garden-site once His—still turf-covered, and closely adjacent—until a stroke "upon the bell" should call us back.

Are there in Stratford any real lovers of the drama, to effect this, upon a "birth-day?" Or do they, then, but talk about their primal townsman, and "feed" to do him honor? What is there appropriate to such a season in spreading then in their town-hall an *exclusive* feast,* to which a few are bidden in the world-enfolding name of Shakspere! But if the men of Stratford hesitate to fulfil the wish above expressed, we think that there are actors of celebrity who would rejoice to render their assistance on such an occasion.

Meanwhile the building seems to be so little needed for theatrical use, that alterations have lately been introduced to fit it for occasional employment as a concert-room, and the delivery of lectures connected with institutions in the town. To this the advocates

* Mr. Busby, in acknowledging a toast said—"He was sorry that the tradesmen of the town were excluded from their meeting, especially when he considered that Shakspeare himself was the son of a tradesman, and got his education in the grammar-school of the town."—*Report of Town-hall Dinner, in Worcester Journal, April*, 1847.

of progress cannot object, while all is still retained that will permit its occasional resumption for fit dramatic purposes.

The present MARKET-HOUSE stands near the site of the old Market Cross; one of those ancient indications of religious sentiment round which our markets were usually held. A market House seems to have been first added here during Elizabeth's reign: but the present structure was erected in 1820; when the shaft of the cross together with the elder market-house appear to have been removed, as obstructions upon the roadway. The new fabric, though somewhat limited in extent, presents a neat appearance toward the street. But it must, within, be far too *airy* for such as are compelled to remain in it for half a day together. How readily might this be obviated, by glazing the heads of the arches, in frames hung upon swivels, and by filling-in with stone below; not flushed, but recessed within the wall. By charter of 59th George III. the market Day was, at about the time of this erection, changed to Friday: Thursday having previously been the day, according to the grant from Richard the first.

While here so near the spot, we cannot but regret that the unsightly and manifestly inconvenient, not to add unhealthy, stack of dwellings fronting the market-house, is still permitted to stand in the very centre of the street. A movement on the part of the corporation, aided by private contributions, if required, would surely soon remove the whole obstruction. This done, a befitting ornament upon its site, as a grateful expression of modern feeling, would be a

statue of that munificent benefactor to his native town Sir Hugh Clopton, sole builder of the adjacent bridge, restorer of the transept of the church, and re-edifier of the interesting gild chapel.

Among the DISSENTING PLACES OF WORSHIP, one belonging to the Independents is in Rother-street; one occupied by the Wesleyans is at the top of Henley-street; and that belonging to the Baptists is in Peyton-street. As regards the last—which is erected in an entirely new division of the town—we cannot but remark that the same expenditure might assuredly have provided a more correctly proportioned portico than the present, which while so egregiously distended, claims to be constructed according to the correct proportions of Tuscan architecture.

SCHOOLS upon the system of Dr. Bell have been in operation here for some years; and recently new and very commodious school-rooms with residences for the instructors have been erected. The buildings are airily situated near the Alcester road, away from the narrow confines of the street; and in conjunction with munificent benefactions from Thomas Mason esq. and W. W. Weston, esq. have been wholly erected by subscriptions and grants. A school in connection with the British and Foreign School Society—which embraces all protestant denominations—has also been established here some time; as have, likewise, two distinct Infant Schools.

In passing near the Bridge of sir Hugh Clopton, the visitor will not fail to observe the wharfs and warehouses connected with the CANAL NAVIGATION,

as also its separate bridge, carrying a tram-railway here, across the river. This extends to the town of Moreton, a distance of sixteen miles, with a connecting branch to Shipston-upon-Stour. By this means the coals of Staffordshire are readily distributed throughout the hill-country in the neighbourhood, where previously the lack of fuel was severely felt ; there being then, in many instances, no other mode of procuring coals than sending a team to Evesham, a distance, often, of more than twenty miles. The Avon is navigable hence, by means of locks, to Tewkesbury ; where it is connected with the traffic of Worcester, Gloucester, and Bristol, by the Severn, into which the Avon flows. The canal from hence to Birmingham was opened in 1817, and the tram-way in September, 1826.

For the advantages of inland navigation during so many years, let us not—while entering upon the "age of iron"—omit to render honor where that tribute is justly due. It being to individual enterprize, originating—so far back as the reign of *Charles I.*—with Mr. William *Sandys* of *Fladbury*, near Evesham, an ancestor of the present noble family of that name, that we owe the boon. That gentleman, grappling resolutely with every obstacle, commenced the work under countenance of "orders in council," in 1635 : purchasing land where needed, and carrying his cuttings through the Vale of Evesham, till he had expended the then considerable sum of £20,000. Having by this only partially completed the navigation from Evesham to Tewkesbury, with injury to his fortune and but a distant prospect of any return, he

at length resigned his undertaking to the parliament, "to do what more they thought fit therein."*

During the protectorate, the navigation between Evesham and Tewkesbury was completed by William Say, esq.: upon whose attainder, at the restoration, this property was forfeited to the crown; and was ultimately purchased by lord Windsor, who in conjunction with Andrew Yarrenton and others completed the navigation from Tewkesbury to Stratford, throughout. But the views of Mr. Yarrenton, as regarded Stratford, did not terminate here. It was his wish to have erected a new town upon the opposite bank of the river, which, with space enough for his commercial propositions, would have occupied thirty acres of land. The particulars of this project appear in a work published by him in 1677, entitled "England's Improvements by Sea and Land:" from the contents of which we infer that the author was a man "beyond his age;" some of his suggestions being still worthy of attention, as bearing on the important "currency" inquiry of our own day.

Bridgtown—for such is the actual name of the once projected site for the Yarrentonian colony—is still a hamlet partly within the parish of Stratford; wherein once stood a hermitage and chapel, dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, endowed with lands for repairing the bridge, and for the behoof—we may presume—of a hermit also. For in the reign of Henry the sixth,

* Account of the Water-works of Mr. William Sandys, by Mrs. Elstob.—*Nash's Worcestershire*, vol. i.

a member of the Power family "constituted one John Rawlyns to be heremite here during his natural life:" who, in return, was—as given in Dugdale—required to celebrate a yearly obit, in the church at Stratford, for the souls of certain members of that family. This Rawlyns was sufficiently social, it appears, to be a member of the neighbouring gild, while living as an *anchorite* close to the town of Stratford! Had he but left a successor, "bearded like the pard," such a one might perhaps, even now, not be left to pine in solitude by Stratfordian visitors.

The manor of Bridgtown came to the Clopton family in the reign of Henry the eighth. The site of the hermitage and chapel is not exactly known; but could not, we think, have been situate far from that ancient manor-house, still looking out upon the bridge along that quiet avenue of trees.

And now, from this eastern suburb of Stratford let us again walk through the town, and, passing near the Poet's birth-place direct our course for BISHOPTON, a neighbouring hamlet,—where still the memory of that master-mind accompanies us: for among these once common fields He, as owner of some acres here, walked, in his later life, upon this addition to his property.* Pursuing this direction—choosing a path through meadows to the side of the canal—we, at a

* ——"arable, meadow and pasture, with the appurtenances, lying and being in the towns, hamlets and villages, fields and grounds of Stratford-upon-Avon, Old Stratford, Bishopton, and Welcombe, in the said county of Warwick; heretofore the inheritance of William Shakspeare, gent."—*Indenture of* 1652.

mile-and-a-half's distance from the town find ourselves within the well-arranged plantations of the modern Spa; and are soon upon the gravel-walk in front of its commodious Hotel and rustic Pump Room. Adjoining the latter is a range of baths—hot and cold, shower and plunging. This addition to the advantages of a moderate-sized and inland town, like that of Stratford, is as important to its inhabitants, as to its visitors; by which latter class it may, for the most part, prove to have been unanticipated.

The efficacy of the spring for internal as well as external use, has been extolled for upwards of a century. Dr. Perry, in 1744, published an analysis of the water, its virtues having then long been known in the neighbourhood; and since that time the eminent chemists, Professor Daniell and Richard Phillips have by modern aids more perfectly ascertained its properties.* Dr. Granville, in his "Midland Spas of England," expresses his opinion 'that a course of the Stratford water will be found useful in certain disorders of the stomach, in slighter affections of the liver, in cases of gravel, and those pseudo-rheumatic and gouty pains which persons with long-deranged digestion are so apt to have superadded to their other sufferings.' Of those

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* The following is the result of Professor Daniell's recent Analysis :—

Specific gravity . . 1004.6

Contents in an Imperial Pint		*Grs.*	*Grs.*
	Sulphuric acid	14.38	41.13
	Muriatic acid	6.09	
	Carbonic acid	1.36	
	Soda	14.78	
	Magnesia	1.95	
	Lime	257	

afflicted with disorders of this character, who obtain little or no relief from ordinary medicine, the Doctor states that they will here find "a spa likely to benefit them to the same extent as if they were to fly for that purpose to more distant shores." The adjoining hotel will, we can add, be found replete with every luxury that the most fastidious can desire; including such—observes the foregoing authority—as "would by many invalids be hardly expected in so retired a place."

The walks and buildings here were completed in the spring of 1837; and the whole was opened on the 24th of May, in that year, and named, by permission from the sovereign—THE VICTORIA SPA. The whole of this agreeable site will now be soon embosomed in its thick plantations, which already render it a retired and most inviting spot for occasional recreation to the towns-people, as well as for the residence of visitors. A part of the estate is apportioned for building uses; and a modern Chapel-of-Ease, erected near the spot, supplants an elder structure, which stood nearer to the original village of Bishopton.

That humble Chapel is engraved in the Gentleman's Magazine for April, 1810; where it presents far more of the retiring character of a rural place of worship than the hard outline prevailing in the later structure. That humble fabric was dedicated to St. Peter, and was liberally endowed—according to Dugdale—so long ago as the reign of John, by sir William de Bishopdon; who also covenanted with "the parson of Stratford-super-Avon," that himself and tenants

should sustain the charges of its building and repair, provide the books and furniture, and secure to the mother-church of Stratford the tithe of corn and flax from Bishopdon, with interment of the dead, mortuaries and certain oblations ; reserving all other obventions, with the small tithes, to the priest serving this chapel, whose appointment was to be vested in the parson of Stratford for the time being.

In varying our return to Stratford—pursuing thus the path along the Henley road—we pass, at the town's entrance, the now decaying "Gospel Tree," that still indicates the boundary of the borough in this direction—toward "the dove-house close." In a perambulation of the boundaries, made here on the 7th of April, 1591,* this elm—judging from its now decayed and weather-beaten aspect—is the one there noted as seated on the boundary in this direction : whence the line is therein stated as continuing to "the two elms in Evesham highway." Such a perambulation was anciently made yearly, during rogation-week, by the clergy, magistrates, and burgesses ; not omitting—for evidence sake—the boys of the grammar-school, who then doubtless received, as still is customary, some *sensitive* reminiscences of local limitation. When the bound-mark was a tree, as in the present instance, a passage of scripture was read beneath its branches, a collect was recited, and a psalm was sung. Hence its sacred designation, long retained, but now well-nigh forgotten.

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* "Presentment," cited as being in the possession of R. Wheler, esq.

In these parochial observances we doubt not the time has been when the school-boy Shakspere here sustained a part. On other occasions, too, he would often pass this Tree; for it stands at the head of the street where his father lived, and where his own birth-place still continues. In later years, also, he would sometimes pass beneath it, when he went forth to look upon his lands within the field of Bishopton, where lay a portion of that worldly wealth, which in his native parish he had, in the rest of a green old age, here recently invested.

[The Gospel Tree.]

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